DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 234 522 EC 160 046

TITLE Braille Reader Survey: Survey Findings.
INSTITUTION Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped.
PUB DATE 3 Jun 83
NOTE 41p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Tests/Evaluation Instruments (160)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Blindness; *Braille; *Library Services; National Surveys; *Reading Materials; Visual Impairments

ABSTRACT

A nationwide survey completed by 242 braille readers was undertaken to gather information on readers' current use of braille materials and their individual reading interests. The majority of respondents preferred braille as their primary reading medium, yet only 63% had borrowed braille materials from the library in the past year. Readers were generally satisfied with the service from cooperating libraries, with major difficulties noted to be receiving, storing, and returning bulky books and boxes. Dissatisfaction in the braille book collection was voiced, as nearly one-third of the respondents did not feel the available braille books generally met their reading needs. Summaries of responses to the 39 items in the questionnaire are presented along with demographic data for the respondents. The survey instrument is appended. (CL)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped
The Library of Congress

1291 Taylor Street NW
Washington, DC 20542
Telephone 202 287-5100
TWX 710-822-1969

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

ED234522

BRAILLE READER SURVEY

SURVEY FINDINGS

JUNE 3, 1983

EC160046

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Hylda Fenisse
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. INTRODUCTION....1

II. METHODOLOGY....1

Sample....1

Instrument....1

Procedure....5

III. MAJOR FINDINGS....5

Sex....5

Geographic Region....5

Age....5

Handicap....5

Employment....20

Braille Reading Ability....20

Use of Braille as a Reading Medium....20

Use of Recorded Materials as a Reading Medium....20

Reading Interests....21

Use of Cooperating Libraries....21

Magazines and Handcopied Braille....21

Satisfaction with Braille Collection....21

Satisfaction with Physical Characteristics of Braille Books....23

Additional Comments by Respondents....23

IV. CONCLUSIONS....23

V. APPENDIX A - Braille Reader Survey (sample survey)....25

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the present survey was to determine the needs and interests of current braille readers and to help explain why braille readers are borrowing fewer books through the braille book program of the National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (NLS) of the Library of Congress.

Table 1 shows total braille readership and circulation figures for a ten-year period ending in 1981. These figures indicate that in recent years, the number of readers borrowing braille books from cooperating libraries has remained relatively constant, while the number of braille books being borrowed has steadily decreased. This nationwide survey was conducted to gather information on readers' current use of braille materials and their individual reading interests.

METHODOLOGY

Sample. A random sample of 500 individuals was selected from the records of the Comprehensive Mailing List System (CMLS). Individuals were selected who receive the braille edition of Braille Book Review. The sample was drawn from a potential pool of 8,540 individuals who met the required criteria.

A comparison of the distribution by geographic region of all individuals in the library program with individuals in the sample is presented in Table 2. A comparison of the distribution by age of all braille readers in the library program with individuals in the sample is presented in Table 3. The data in these tables indicate that this random sample is representative of the population of readers who use braille materials for age and geographic region.

Instrument. The survey instrument (Appendix A) was developed by the Consumer Relations Section and other staff members at NLS. It was produced in Grade 2 English braille.

The instrument was designed to reflect braille readers' current use of braille materials and their relative satisfaction with various aspects of the braille book program. The survey allowed considerable opportunity for open-ended comment by respondents.

TABLE 1

10 YEAR SUMMARY OF BRAILLE SERVICE - CIRCULATION TO INDIVIDUALS
(Excludes deposits, direct circulation magazines, and interlibrary loan)

	FY72	FY73	FY74	FY75	FY76	FY77	FY78	FY79	FY80	FY81	Change 1972-1981
Individual Readership											
Network Libraries	13,920	14,320	13,440	13,610	15,050	13,750	13,660	14,160	15,310	14,400	+480 (3.4%)
Music Services, NLS	4,400	4,590	5,180	510	640	970	780	550	690	990	
Direct Service				840	260[1]	270	10[2]	30	20	30	
Total	18,320	18,910	18,620	14,960	15,950	14,990	14,450	14,740	16,020	15,420	
Circulation to Individuals											
Network Libraries	370,300	371,000	316,800	313,200	312,800	295,300	260,200	264,100	259,700	262,100	-108,200 (-29.2%)
Music Services, NLS	51,300	26,200	26,000	5,200	3,500	5,900	5,400	4,100	5,000	6,700	
Direct Service				19,800	4,300[1]	2,700	200[2]	200	100	100	
Total	421,600	397,200	342,800	338,200	320,600	303,900	265,800	268,400	264,800	268,900	
Circulation Per Reader											
Network Libraries	26.6	25.9	23.6	23.0	20.8	21.5	19.0	18.7	17.0	18.2	

[1]Reflects transfer of service to regionals.
[2]Only direct service is to overseas patrons from FY78 on.

TABLE 2

DISTRIBUTION BY GEOGRAPHIC REGION
FOR ALL PROGRAM USERS AND SURVEY SAMPLE

	Percentage of Individual Readers in Program	Percentage of Individual Readers in Sample
South	27.4	23.8
North	30.0	27.0
West	18.6	20.0
Midlands	24.0	29.0
Overseas	.1	.2
	100.1	100.0

TABLE 3

DISTRIBUTION BY AGE
FOR BRAILLE READERS AND SURVEY SAMPLE

	Percentage of Braille Readers in Program[1]		Percentage of Braille Readers in Sample[2]
Under 14	5.0	Under 15	4.1
15 - 44	50.0	15 - 39	50.9
45 - 64	28.0	40 - 64	28.0
65 and Over	17.0	65 and Over	17.0
	100.0		100.0

[1]Based on data from Readership Characteristics and Attitudes, 1981.
[2]Based on CMLS birth year data which was available for 63.6% of the sample.

Procedure. A packet was mailed to each individual in the sample containing the introductory material and survey questions in braille, a postage-free return envelope, and a large-print sheet. The large-print sheet read: "The enclosed survey is being sent to you to gather information about your current uses of braille material. If you are not a braille reader, please return the uncompleted survey in the enclosed envelope. If you are a braille reader, who would like assistance reading the questions or filling in the answers, you may call toll-free 1-800-424-8567 and ask for the Consumer Relations Section. A staff member will return your call to assist you by completing your survey by telephone." 35 individuals returned the survey with no responses, indicating that they were not braille readers. 45 individuals, 18.6 percent of respondents, chose to answer the survey by telephone.

Six weeks after the survey was mailed, a follow-up letter in braille was mailed to all individuals in the sample who had not responded. Approximately 20 percent of the total number of surveys were received after the follow-up letter was mailed.

MAJOR FINDINGS

A total of 277 surveys were received, representing a 55.4 percent return of the number of surveys distributed. 35 surveys contained no responses, indicating that the individual was not a braille reader, leaving a total of 242 (48.4 percent) surveys for tabulation. Not all respondents replied to each question. Therefore, the total number of responses to each question varied slightly. For a detailed presentation of the results by item, refer to Table 4.

Sex. 59.3 percent (143) of all respondents were female. This figure compares favorably with a previous estimate of 57.0 percent female, found by a large national survey of users entitled Readership Characteristics and Attitudes, 1981.

Geographic Region. A comparison of the distribution by geographic region of survey respondents with all program users and the survey sample is presented in Table 5. This comparison shows that each geographic region is well represented by survey respondents.

Age. 21 (8.7 percent) of respondents to this question were under the age of 25. 129 respondents, forty years of age and over, represented 53.8 percent--over half of the total. A comparison of the distribution by age of survey respondents with all braille readers and the survey sample is presented in Table 6. It is significant to note that those braille readers choosing to respond to the survey were much older than either all braille readers or the survey sample--younger individuals were less likely to respond while older, presumably long-time, braille readers were more likely to respond to the survey.

Handicap. 77.2 percent (183) of respondents were totally blind and another 21.5 percent (51) were visually handicapped but with some usable

TABLE 4

SUMMARY OF RESPONSES

PART I.

The first group of questions refers to your use of braille in general. When "braille books" or "braille magazines" are mentioned, they include not only materials borrowed or available from you cooperating library, but also books or magazines obtained from any library, organization, or other source.

1. Would you describe your ability to read braille as:

139 excellent

78 good

20 fair

3 poor

0 not a braille reader at all (If you do not read braille at all, please return the survey uncompleted and accept our thanks for your cooperation.)

2. At about what age did you begin to read braille?

198 18 and under

19 19 - 34

15 35 - 54

8 55 and over

3. In which of the following ways do you currently read most frequently? (Please mark one only.)

124 braille

105 recorded

0 large print

5 someone else reading to me

3 other (Please specify.)

4. In which of the following ways do you currently read second most frequently? (Please mark one only.)

119 braille

79 recorded

3 large print

29 someone else reading to me

4 other (Please specify.)

5. If all reading material could be in the format of your choice, in which of the following ways would you prefer to read? (Please mark one only.)

163 braille

66 recorded

1 large print

2 someone else reading to me

2 other (Please specify.)

6. In the past four months, have you spent any time at all reading: (Please mark all that apply.)

187 braille books

210 braille magazines

142 braille correspondence

163 braille notes or labels

103 other braille materials

1 have read no braille in the past four months

7. Which of the following subjects do you prefer to read about in braille? (Please mark all that apply.)

120 current events and commentary

47 sports

123 Bible and religion

77 psychology and sociology

97 do-it-yourself manuals

140 cookbooks

100 crafts and hobbies

135 reference (dictionaries, directories, almanacs, etc.)

50 business

66 nature

66 travel

79 science

71 U.S. history

64 world history

78 poetry

69 plays

84 humor

109 short stories

46 science fiction

99 mysteries and detective stories

61 spy stories

63 westerns

47 children's books

79 textbooks

98 best sellers

83 romances

96 classics

45 fine arts

84 biographies

32 other (Please specify.)

8. Which of the following subjects do you prefer to read about in a format other than braille? (Please mark all that apply.)

82 current events and commentary

39 sports

45 Bible and religion

45 psychology and sociology

26 do-it-yourself manuals

28 cookbooks

23 crafts and hobbies

28 reference (dictionaries, directories, almanacs, etc.)

37 business

57 nature

60 travel

50 science

66 U.S. history

68 world history

37 poetry

60 plays

65 humor

87 short stories

51 science fiction

84 mysteries and detective stories

52 spy stories

60 westerns

16 children's books

35 textbooks

95 best sellers

68 romances

76 classics

34 fine arts

79 biographies

7 other (Please specify.)

PART II.

The next group of questions specifically asks about books, magazines, and other services from cooperating libraries. These are libraries which circulate braille and/or recorded books that are obtained through the Library of Congress program.

9. How many years ago did you begin borrowing recorded materials from a cooperating library?

1 less than 1

6 1 - 3

13 4 - 6

17 7 - 9

189 10 or more

11 have never borrowed recorded materials from a cooperating library

10. When was the last time you borrowed a recorded book from a cooperating library?

173 in the past 4 months

10 5 - 11 months ago

15 1 - 3 years ago

3 4 - 6 years ago

4 7 - 9 years ago

11 10 or more years ago

15 have never borrowed recorded books from a cooperating library

11. How many years ago did you begin borrowing braille materials from a cooperating library?

__9__ less than 1

__9__ 1 - 3

__12__ 4 - 6

__15__ 7 - 9

__18?__ 10 or more

__9__ have never borrowed braille materials from a cooperating library (If you have never borrowed braille materials from a cooperating library, please skip to question 34.)

12. When was the last time you borrowed a braille book from a cooperating library?

__143__ in the past 4 months

__22__ 5 - 11 months ago

__34__ 1 - 3 years ago

__10__ 4 - 6 years ago

__3__ 7 - 9 years ago

__15__ 10 or more years ago

13. About how many hours per month do you currently spend reading braille books from your cooperating library?

__48__ 0

__33__ 1 - 5

__25__ 6 - 10

__19__ 11 - 15

__22__ 16 - 20

__78__ 21 or more

14. If a book is not available in braille, do you usually prefer to borrow the title:

61 on disc

160 on cassette

42 would switch to another braille book

15. Since you began borrowing braille books from a cooperating library, has the number of braille books you borrow:

77 generally increased

79 generally decreased

75 stayed about the same

16. When ordering braille books from a cooperating library, do you usually:

181 order specific book titles

32 ask the librarian to select books for you

17. How many braille magazines do you currently receive that are obtained through your cooperating library?

67 0

63 1 - 2

58 3 - 5

25 6 - 9

17 10 or more

18. Have you encountered any difficulties obtaining braille magazines through your cooperating library?

41 yes (Please specify.)

174 no

19. In the past year, have you read any handcopied braille books, that is, books with a "BRA" prefix to the order number?

96 yes

121 no

14 don't know

20. Have you encountered any difficulties using handcopied braille books?

29 yes (Please specify.)

126 no

63 have not borrowed handcopied braille books

21. When selecting braille books, do you think the variety of topics is great enough?

140 yes

80 no

22. Do you think there are enough different braille books within each topic?

107 yes

108 no

23. Do you think the braille books are current enough?

123 yes

97 no

24. Do you find that the available braille books generally meet your reading needs?

158 yes

62 no

25. Do you think that the quality of the braille dots in press braille books is:

87 excellent

111 good

26 satisfactory

0 poor

26. Do you think that the thickness of the average braille volume (approximately 200 pages) is:

5 too thin

18 too thick

195 about right

27. "Thermoformed materials" are single-sided plastic copies of hand-transcribed paper masters. "Paper materials" may be single- or double-sided paper copies of braille materials. Do you find thermoformed reading materials:

63 same as paper materials

126 less pleasant to use than paper materials

17 more pleasant to use than paper materials

27 have never used thermoformed reading materials

28. Some braille books are now produced on paper and some on thermoform plastic. Would you be willing to accept considerably fewer braille titles in order to have books produced only on paper?

36 yes

145 no

46 it doesn't matter

29. Do you think the usual waiting time to receive braille books from your cooperating library is:

175 about right

44 too long

30. When you receive braille books, do you usually get:

35 too many at one time

157 about the right number

23 not enough at one time

31. About how long does it usually take to receive specific braille books you have ordered?

38 less than 1 week

85 1 - 2 weeks

38 between 2 and 3 weeks

48 3 weeks or more

32. How do you usually return braille books to your cooperating library?

96 postman picks them up

52 take them to the post office myself

53 someone else takes them to the post office

6 take them to the library directly

5 other (Please specify.)

33. Do you encounter any difficulties receiving or returning braille books?

45 yes (Please specify.)

171 no

34. In what ways do you think the braille book program could be improved? (Please specify.)

PART III.

The last group of questions asks for some information about yourself. This information is needed to be sure that we are getting a good representation of all readers.

35. Are you:

98 male

144 female

36. Age in years at your last birthday:

3 less than 15

18 15 - 24

91 25 - 39

94 40 - 64

35 65 and over

37. State in which you reside:

38. Are you: (Please mark all that apply.)

93 employed

96 unemployed

48 retired

29 student

83 homemaker

39. Are you: (Please mark all that apply.)

184 totally blind or no usable vision

51 some usable vision

9 physically handicapped (Please specify.)

21 hearing impaired

0 learning disabled

5 other (Please specify.)

Please return the completed survey in the enclosed pre-addressed, postage-paid envelope to the Consumer Relations Section, National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. 20542. Thank you very much for your cooperation.

TABLE 5

DISTRIBUTION BY GEOGRAPHIC REGION
FOR ALL PROGRAM USERS, SURVEY SAMPLE, AND SURVEY RESPONDENTS

	Percentage of Individual Readers in Program	Percentage of Individual Readers in Sample	Percentage of Survey Respondents
South	27.4	23.8	24.0
North	30.0	27.0	26.5
West	18.6	20.0	21.5
Midlands	24.0	29.0	27.8
Overseas	.1	.2	.2
	100.1	100.0	100.0

TABLE 6

DISTRIBUTION BY AGE
FOR BRAILLE READERS, SURVEY SAMPLE, AND SURVEY RESPONDENTS

	Percentage of Braille Readers in Program[1]		Percentage of Braille Readers in Sample[2]	Percentage of Survey Respondents
Under 14	5.0	Under 15	4.1	1.3
15 - 44	50.0	15 - 39	50.9	45.2
45 - 64	28.0	40 - 64	28.0	39.0
65 and Over	17.0	65 and Over	17.0	14.5
	100.0		100.0	100.0

[1]Based on data from Readership Characteristics and Attitudes, 1981.
[2]Based on CMLS birth year data which was available for 63.6% of the sample.

vision. 8.9 percent had a hearing impairment in addition to their visual impairment. None was learning disabled. These figures are consistent with traditional estimates of handicapping condition among the braille readership.

Employment. 59.0 percent of respondents were either employed or retired, while 40.2 percent were unemployed. This level of employment is significantly higher than employment estimates for the blind population as a whole.

Braille Reading Ability. 90.4 percent of respondents described themselves as either excellent or good braille readers and 82.5 percent of them learned braille when they were 18 years of age or younger. It is probable that poorer braille readers were less likely to respond to the survey instrument because, although a telephone survey was available, the instrument was primarily designed for those who read braille. Therefore, these survey findings most probably reflect the habits and opinions of the better braille readers of the population.

Use of Braille as a Reading Medium. A majority of respondents (52.3 percent) reported that they currently read most frequently in braille and 44.3 percent currently use recorded material most frequently. No respondent uses large print as a primary reading medium. A survey item that asked respondents to indicate which reading mode they currently use second most frequently revealed that 50.9 percent of respondents use braille second most frequently. When asked, "If all reading material could be in the format of your choice," 71.8 percent reported that they prefer braille as their primary method of reading.

In the past four months, 86.8 percent of respondents have read braille magazines; 77.3 percent have read braille books; 58.7 percent have used braille for correspondence and 67.4 percent have used braille for notes or labels. For these individuals, braille appears not only to be a major reading modality but also to be a communications medium that is used in many aspects of their lives.

77.1 percent of respondents have been borrowing braille material from cooperating libraries for ten years or more; however, 3.8 percent state that they have never borrowed braille materials from a cooperating library.

Only 63.0 percent of respondents have borrowed braille materials from a cooperating library in the past year, while 6.6 percent of respondents haven't borrowed braille materials in ten years or more. Though 34.7 percent of respondents indicated that they spend 21 or more hours per month reading braille books from their cooperating library, 21.3 percent of respondents state that they spend no time at all reading braille books from their cooperating library. From these figures, it seems that many braille readers are using braille books very extensively; however, there is also a substantial portion of serious braille users who are reading braille materials sporadically, if at all.

Use of Recorded Materials as a Reading Medium. 79.7 percent of respondents have been borrowing recorded materials from cooperating libraries

for ten years or more, although 4.6 percent have never borrowed recorded materials at all. 74.9 percent have borrowed recorded materials in the past four months, significantly more than have borrowed braille in the same period. When asked, "If a book is not available in braille, do you usually prefer to borrow the title on disc, on cassette, or switch to another braille book?" 56.1 percent would want to borrow the book on cassette; 13.1 percent would want to borrow the book on disc; and 14.5 percent would switch to another braille title.

Reading Interests. Table 7 presents the reading interests of survey respondents. The left column shows subject areas that braille readers "prefer to read in braille" and the right column shows subject areas that braille readers "prefer to read in a format other than braille." It can be seen from this table that braille readers prefer very different kinds of material in braille than in other formats. It seems that braille was preferred for those items requiring quick access--cookbooks, reference materials, and so forth, whereas, in a format other than braille, respondents preferred to read such items as bestsellers, mysteries, and so forth.

Use of Cooperating Libraries. About one-third of respondents reported that the number of braille books they borrow has generally decreased, while another third of respondents indicated that their braille book borrowing has generally increased. Almost all respondents (85.0 percent) indicated that they usually ordered specific book titles when ordering braille books. 79.2 percent think that the waiting time to receive braille books is about right; yet, 40.7 percent receive their books between 1 and 2 weeks after ordering; 18.2 percent receive them between 2 and 3 weeks after ordering; and 23.0 percent receive them in 3 weeks or more. 73.0 percent feel that they receive about the right number of books at a time. In general, respondents seem to have very positive feelings toward the quality of their library service.

The postman picks up braille books from 45.3 percent of respondents and 25.0 percent have someone else take books to the post office for them. 79.2 percent feel that they do not have any difficulties with postal matters.

Magazines and Handcopied Braille. 29.1 percent of respondents receive no braille magazines and 52.6 percent receive between 1 and 5 braille magazines. 80.9 percent of respondents feel that they have no difficulties with their magazine circulation.

Only 40.0 percent of respondents believe that they have ever borrowed handcopied braille books; yet, when asked about difficulty with handcopied braille, the majority say that they are not having any difficulty. 13.3 percent of respondents report having difficulty with handcopied braille circulation. Specific difficulties included: "Takes too long to get them;" "pages are sometimes missing;" "pages melt in hot weather;" and "pages sometimes fold back on my hands while reading."

Satisfaction with Braille Collection. 63.6 percent of respondents think the variety of braille books from which to choose is great enough. 36.3 percent think that the variety is not great enough. 50.2 percent do

TABLE 7

READING INTERESTS

Prefer to Read in Braille		Prefer to Read in a Format Other Than Braille	
Cookbooks	140	Best Sellers	95
Reference	135	Short Stories	87
Bible and Religion	123	Mysteries and Detective	84
Current Events and Commentary	120	Current Events and Commentary	82
Short Stories	109	Biographies	79
Crafts and Hobbies	100	Classics	76
Mysteries and Detective	99	Romances	68
Best Sellers	98	World History	68
Do-It-Yourself Manuals	97	U.S. History	66
Classics	96	Humor	65
Biographies	84	Plays	60
Humor	84	Travel	60
Romances	83	Westerns	60
Science	79	Nature	57
Textbooks	79	Spy Stories	52
Poetry	78	Science Fiction	51
Psychology and Sociology	77	Science	50
U.S. History	71	Bible and Religion	45
Plays	69	Psychology and Sociology	45
Nature	66	Sports	39
Travel	66	Business	37
World History	64	Poetry	37
Westerns	63	Textbooks	35
Spy Stories	61	Fine Arts	34
Business	50	Cookbooks	28
Children's Books	47	Reference	28
Sports	47	Do-It-Yourself Manuals	26
Science Fiction	46	Crafts and Hobbies	23
Fine Arts	45	Children's Books	16

not think that there are enough different titles within each topic. 44.1 percent do not think the braille books are current enough. 28.2 percent do not feel that the available braille books generally meet their reading needs.

Satisfaction with Physical Characteristics of Braille Books. 88.4 percent of respondents feel that the quality of the braille dots in press braille books is either excellent or good. 89.4 percent feel that the thickness of the braille books is about right.

54.1 percent of respondents feel that thermoform materials are less pleasant to use than paper materials; however, when asked if they would be willing to accept fewer braille titles in order not to have books produced on thermoform, 63.9 percent said they would not be willing to accept fewer titles.

Additional Comments by Respondents. Many respondents made general comments in addition to their survey responses. Most comments dealt with the bulkiness of braille and the variety and timeliness of materials. A sampling includes: "Books ordered are never received; books received are not your selection;" "I like to read braille but it is more convenient to use recorded materials;" "it's hard to get to the post office;" "more selections, faster service;" "newer titles of current interest, wider range of subjects on different topics, more copies of books that are in great demand;" "better containers, more 'how-to' books;" "more books to choose from, and I worry because there are fewer and fewer books;" "books could be less bulky and containers easier to manipulate;" "cartons could be lighter and smaller;" "perhaps a permanent return label could be put on the carton; then the top card could be thrown away;" "sometimes I cannot get the card in or out because it is taped; sometimes the straps are so worn that I cannot strap them;" "biggest difficulty is not knowing what is available;" "biggest problem of all is sending and receiving bulky braille books;" "centralized cataloging and circulation of handcopied books like music;" "I preferred the canvas bags we used to use;" "braille's biggest disadvantage is its bulkiness; therefore, I am very interested in the development of paperless braille and a portable reading machine;" "I use braille at work and recorded books for leisure reading;" "I stopped receiving books because they were such a hassle--no post office nearby;" "my living situation does not permit me to receive large objects;" "I wonder how they can keep enough books in the library if they send as many to others as they do to me;" and "I would like to thank the Library of Congress for all that this great body of people have done to make life so much more interesting for all the blind and physically handicapped."

CONCLUSIONS

A return of 48.4 percent of surveys from individuals selected randomly is evidence of substantial interest in the braille book program of the National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped. The majority of respondents prefer braille as their primary reading medium. However, with such a significant number of individuals preferring braille,

it is certainly noteworthy that only 63.0 percent have borrowed braille from their library in the past year.

Over half of the respondents have never borrowed handcopied braille. This very large proportion of the braille book collection is being under-utilized. Efforts should be continued toward increasing the handcopied braille circulation, perhaps through more user awareness.

In general, readers are quite satisfied with the quality of service being received from cooperating libraries. The major difficulties cited regarding the use of braille books were problems in receiving, storing, and returning bulky books and boxes. There is more dissatisfaction, however, with the braille book collection. Readers have an interest in reading some types of books in braille and other types of books in formats other than braille. As cassettes become more and more usable by readers, braille book selection should be considered very carefully against reader interests. Nearly one-third of respondents do not feel that the available braille books generally meet their reading needs.

APPENDIX A

NATIONAL LIBRARY SERVICE
FOR THE BLIND AND PHYSICALLY HANDICAPPED
Library of Congress
Washington, D.C.
November, 1982

BRAILLE READER SURVEY

In recent years, the number of readers borrowing braille books from cooperating libraries has remained relatively constant, while the number of braille books being borrowed has steadily decreased. A nationwide survey is being conducted by the National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (NLS) in order to understand more clearly the needs and interests of current braille readers and to help explain why braille readers are borrowing fewer books. Information is being gathered on readers' current use of braille materials, their current use of other library services, including recorded materials, and their individual reading interests. This information will be used by NLS to develop plans to improve the selection, production, and distribution methods of braille materials in the coming years.

You are one of a number of readers who are being asked about these issues. Your name was selected from a list of those individuals who receive the braille edition of Braille Book Review. In order for the results to truly represent the opinions and interests of readers in all parts of the country, it is important that a large percentage of surveys be completed and returned. It is essential that we obtain both positive and negative comments. We hope to learn more about areas where there is need for improvement.

By completing the attached brief survey, you will have the opportunity to provide information and express opinions that will affect the direction of the NLS braille book program. After completing the survey, please return it in the enclosed pre-addressed, postage-paid envelope no later than three weeks from the day you receive it. If you have any difficulty reading the questions, or filling in the answers, call toll-free 1-800-424-8567 and ask for the Consumer Relations Section. A staff member will return your call and assist you by completing your survey by telephone. The enclosed large-print sheet contains instructions for those who do not read braille and may be discarded if not needed. Thank you.

INSTRUCTIONS:

Please use a pen or pencil and draw a heavy line through the line of braille dots that immediately precedes your response choice. For those questions that require additional information, you may write in print or braille on the enclosed sheet of paper. Be sure that your response is written next to the number that corresponds to the question on the survey. If additional space is required, you may use another sheet of paper. Please feel free to make as many comments as you like.

PART I.

The first group of questions refers to your use of braille in general. When "braille books" or "braille magazines" are mentioned, they include not only materials borrowed or available from you cooperating library, but also books or magazines obtained from any library, organization, or other source.

1. Would you describe your ability to read braille as:

_____excellent

_____good

_____fair

_____poor

_____not a braille reader at all (If you do not read braille at all, please return the survey uncompleted and accept our thanks for your cooperation.)

2. At about what age did you begin to read braille?

_____18 and under

_____19 - 34

_____35 - 54

_____55 and over

3. In which of the following ways do you currently read most frequently? (Please mark one only.)

_____braille

_____recorded

_____large print

_____someone else reading to me

_____other (Please specify.)

4. In which of the following ways do you currently read second most frequently? (Please mark one only.)

_____braille

_____recorded

_____large print

_____someone else reading to me

_____other (Please specify.)

5. If all reading material could be in the format of your choice, in which of the following ways would you prefer to read? (Please mark one only.)

_____braille

_____recorded

_____large print

_____someone else reading to me

_____other (Please specify.)

6. In the past four months, have you spent any time at all reading: (Please mark all that apply.)

_____braille books

_____braille magazines

_____braille correspondence

_____braille notes or labels

_____other braille materials

_____have read no braille in the past four months

7. Which of the following subjects do you prefer to read about in braille? (Please mark all that apply.)

_____current events and commentary

_____sports

_____Bible and religion

_____psychology and sociology

_____do-it-yourself manuals

_____cookbooks

_____crafts and hobbies

_____reference (dictionaries, directories, almanacs, etc.)

_____business

_____nature

_____travel

_____science

_____U.S. history

_____world history

_____poetry

_____plays

_____humor

_____short stories

_____science fiction

_____mysteries and detective stories

_____spy stories

_____westerns

_____children's books

_____textbooks

_____best sellers

_____romances

_____classics

_____fine arts

_____biographies

_____other (Please specify.)

8. Which of the following subjects do you prefer to read about in a format other than braille? (Please mark all that apply.)

_____current events and commentary

_____sports

_____Bible and religion

_____psychology and sociology

_____do-it-yourself manuals

_____cookbooks

_____crafts and hobbies

_____reference (dictionaries, directories, almanacs, etc.)

_____business

_____nature

_____travel

_____science

_____U.S. history

_____world history

_____poetry

_____plays

_____humor

_____short stories

_____science fiction

_____mysteries and detective stories

_____spy stories

_____westerns

_____children's books

_____textbooks

_____best sellers

_____romances

_____classics

_____fine arts

_____biographies

_____other (Please specify.)

PART II.

The next group of questions specifically asks about books, magazines, and other services from cooperating libraries. These are libraries which circulate braille and/or recorded books that are obtained through the Library of Congress program.

9. How many years ago did you begin borrowing recorded materials from a cooperating library?

_____less than 1

_____1 - 3

_____4 - 6

_____7 - 9

_____10 or more

_____have never borrowed recorded materials from a cooperating library

10. When was the last time you borrowed a recorded book from a cooperating library?

_____in the past 4 months

_____5 - 11 months ago

_____1 - 3 years ago

_____4 - 6 years ago

_____7 - 9 years ago

_____10 or more years ago

_____have never borrowed recorded books from a cooperating library

11. How many years ago did you begin borrowing braille materials from a cooperating library?

_____less than 1

_____1 - 3

_____4 - 6

_____7 - 9

_____10 or more

_____have never borrowed braille materials from a cooperating library (If you have never borrowed braille materials from a cooperating library, please skip to question 34 .)

12. When was the last time you borrowed a braille book from a cooperating library?

_____in the past 4 months

_____5 - 11 months ago

_____1 - 3 years ago

_____4 - 6 years ago

_____7 - 9 years ago

_____10 or more years ago

13. About how many hours per month do you currently spend reading braille books from your cooperating library?

_____0

_____1 - 5

_____6 - 10

_____11 - 15

_____16 - 20

_____21 or more

14. If a book is not available in braille, do you usually prefer to borrow the title:

_____on disc

_____on cassette

_____would switch to another braille book

15. Since you began borrowing braille books from a cooperating library, has the number of braille books you borrow:

_____generally increased

_____generally decreased

_____stayed about the same

16. When ordering braille books from a cooperating library, do you usually:

_____order specific book titles

_____ask the librarian to select books for you

17. How many braille magazines do you currently receive that are obtained through your cooperating library?

_____0

_____1 - 2

_____3 - 5

_____6 - 9

_____10 or more

18. Have you encountered any difficulties obtaining braille magazines through your cooperating library?

_____yes (Please specify.)

_____no

19. In the past year, have you read any handcopied braille books, that is, books with a "BRA" prefix to the order number?

_____yes

_____no

_____don't know

20. Have you encountered any difficulties using handcopied braille books?

_____yes (Please specify.)

_____no

_____have not borrowed handcopied braille books

21. When selecting braille books, do you think the variety of topics is great enough?

_____yes

_____no

22. Do you think there are enough different braille books within each topic?

_____yes

_____no

23. Do you think the braille books are current enough?

_____yes

_____no

24. Do you find that the available braille books generally meet your reading needs?

_____yes

_____no

25. Do you think that the quality of the braille dots in press braille books is:

_____excellent

_____good

_____satisfactory

_____poor

26. Do you think that the thickness of the average braille volume (approximately 200 pages) is:

_____too thin

_____too thick

_____about right

27. "Thermoformed materials" are single-sided plastic copies of hand-transcribed paper masters. "Paper materials" may be single- or double-sided paper copies of braille materials. Do you find thermoformed reading materials:

_____same as paper materials

_____less pleasant to use than paper materials

_____more pleasant to use than paper materials

_____have never used thermoformed reading materials

28. Some braille books are now produced on paper and some on thermoform plastic. Would you be willing to accept considerably fewer braille titles in order to have books produced only on paper?

_____yes

_____no

_____it doesn't matter

29. Do you think the usual waiting time to receive braille books from your cooperating library is:

_____about right

_____too long

30. When you receive braille books, do you usually get:

_____too many at one time

_____about the right number

_____not enough at one time

31. About how long does it usually take to receive specific braille books you have ordered?

_____less than 1 week

_____1 - 2 weeks

_____between 2 and 3 weeks

_____3 weeks or more

32. How do you usually return braille books to your cooperating library?

_____postman picks them up

_____take them to the post office myself

_____someone else takes them to the post office

_____take them to the library directly

_____other (Please specify.)

33. Do you encounter any difficulties receiving or returning braille books?

_____yes (Please specify.)

_____no

34. In what ways do you think the braille book program could be improved? (Please specify.)

PART III.

The last group of questions asks for some information about yourself. This information is needed to be sure that we are getting a good representation of all readers.

35. Are you:

_____male

_____female

36. Age in years at your last birthday:

_____less than 15

_____15 - 24

_____25 - 39

_____40 - 64

_____65 and over

37. State in which you reside:

38. Are you: (Please mark all that apply.)

_____employed

_____unemployed

_____retired

_____student

_____homemaker

39. Are you: (Please mark all that apply.)

_____totally blind or no usable vision

_____some usable vision

_____physically handicapped (Please specify.)

_____hearing impaired

_____learning disabled

_____other (Please specify.)

Please return the completed survey in the enclosed pre-addressed, postage-paid envelope to the Consumer Relations Section, National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. 20542. Thank you very much for your cooperation.